

SECRETS OF SEASONED PROFESSIONALS

*They Learned the Hard Way,
So You Don't Have To*

EXCERPT

**Parts of each section are included here
so readers can get a feel for the
material and writing style.
Hundreds more tips and techniques are
in the full book.**

By Kelly A. Tyler

Secrets of Seasoned Professionals

***They Learned the Hard Way,
So You Don't Have To***

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INTRODUCTION

There's a difference between acceptable and impressive.

The difference distinguishes people. It distinguishes companies.

The most successful make the leap from acceptable to impressive. They pay attention to the difference, make the effort, and enjoy the fruits of their effort by standing out from the crowd.

Impressive people pay attention to details overlooked or ignored by average performers.

It takes polished, professional behavior to build a business reputation one can be proud of. It takes elements beyond knowing which fork to use. And, it takes some effort.

Acceptable people tend to take the easy route. Impressive people give a little more effort, focusing on long-term results rather than short-term gains.

Impressive companies distinguish themselves by encouraging people to make the leap. Their culture stimulates people to move beyond average to excellent.

This book is about making the leap from acceptable to impressive. It is full of many

seemingly minor details successful people employ to distinguish themselves.

“The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little bit extra.”

This book can enhance your professional reputation, solidify relationships with coworkers and clients, and help improve productivity.

Learn from mistakes of others; learn what’s worked for others. Save yourself from experiencing the errors and embarrassment others have endured. Your route up the career ladder can be a little smoother if you use this as a guide.

You can make the career journey a little smoother, but there is still much work to do. Enjoy the ride and bring others along with you when you can.

PART 1 EXCERPT

PERSONAL FOUNDATION

The foundation for how one presents oneself is self-esteem.

Self-esteem shows through in how we treat others, treatment we tolerate, expectations we have of ourselves and others, and our demeanor through all circumstances.

Smiling, for example, requires comfort with oneself. You can't smile much if you do not feel good about yourself. Smiling sends a signal of confidence, making others comfortable too.

Self-esteem is what you like about yourself, confidence is belief in yourself, and motivation is what prompts action.

Self-Esteem & Confidence

What do you hold in high regard about yourself? What do you like about yourself? What makes you feel confident? Know the answer to those questions, so you can present yourself as someone with esteem and confidence.

If you come across as not having confidence in yourself, you will prompt the same from others. People take their cue from you. If you

act like someone without confidence, you will be treated that way. And, it is likely you will end up with no confidence.

BUSINESS ATTIRE

In the 1990s many businesses lowered dress standards from business attire to business casual. Employee habits have lowered standards further, causing many companies to return to more formal business attire. Employers report the weekend-wear attire commonly worn in many offices has reduced productivity and the level of professionalism.

Whether you are required to wear suits to work every day, or you can wear jeans, understand the way you dress affects others' perceptions of you and your work.

If you can leave the office on a Friday night and head straight for the latest dance club, you are probably not dressing professionally enough. If you can leave the office for the gym and jump right on a treadmill without changing clothes, you are dressing too casually. If you clean the garage in the same clothes you wear to work, you are not presenting yourself as a business professional. Or, perhaps you are really dressed up while sweeping the garage!

It is often said that one should dress according to the position desired. To help determine what's best around the office, take a look at the executives. How do the upper

level women dress? How do the male executives dress? You will get insight into what's expected, regardless of the written policy.

Dress according to the highest standard in the office. Do not dress to meet the lowest standard. Do not dress according to what you can get away with but with what represents you best.

You get one chance to make a first impression. Make sure it is the right one. Make it purposefully.

While accepted business attire confuses many, there are a few guidelines that can help ensure you are presenting yourself well. The following section provides suggestions for women, men, and both genders:

PART 1

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Identify actions mentioned here which you already do and want to continue.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Identify three actions you will implement after reading through this section.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Identify actions you can share with others.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

A highlight sheet like this follows each section.

PART 2 EXCERPT

BASICS OF BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

What comes to mind when you think of etiquette? Which fork to use first, or why a spoon is across the top of the place setting, or the proper way to eat lobster? Etiquette goes way beyond place settings in business.

Etiquette is the well known set of rules used to make everyone comfortable in a variety of situations.

Etiquette shows respect for others, which is why it is critical to understand and use in business today.

As workplaces have become more casual, etiquette and manners are less common. And, the perception of the rules as too formal is more common.

While some of the rules may seem like stodgy minutia, it is in the details where people distinguish themselves. Make the effort to understand etiquette, and you will see results.

The #1 tip regarding etiquette is never point out etiquette faux pas of others.

This section of the book shares dozens of additional tips, starting with how you present yourself.

RESTAURANTS

Whether it is a department meeting over lunch or a celebratory dinner with a client, etiquette rules are important to follow in restaurants. Sometimes sharing a meal is part of a job interview.

Kate reports about being interviewed over a lunch meeting that did not go very well. She was the guest of two possible coworkers, who gossiped about the boss and others throughout the meal. Not only did they gossip, they asked illegal questions, and pried into Kate's life. Kate knew enough to keep her mouth closed. She also knew if her future coworkers behaved that way upon the first meeting, they would only get worse if she joined them. Kate's job search continued a little longer until she found a more professional, respectful business to join.

You may be out of the office, but you are still expected to behave as a business professional. The tips below will help ensure your impression remains top notch, even when you are out of the office.

1. Be conscious of time. Restaurants count on table turnovers at least every 90

minutes. Most business lunches should take no more than 90 minutes, as people need to return to work.

2. Cell phones, PDAs, purses, brief cases, portfolios, notepads do not belong on the table
3. Order something you know you will like. Experiment at another time.

Order something simple. An order too complicated and time-consuming to prepare can give the impression the diner is finicky, picky, and difficult to work with. It also may be more difficult to eat.

WORK SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

The holiday party, annual summer picnic, going away parties, weddings, baby showers—all of these are business events. Do not mistakenly think that because they are social, you are free to loosen up.

1. Keep your guard up. Behave professionally.
2. Limit alcohol intake to one or two. Do not get drunk at a work function. Do not drink alcohol and drive.
3. Do not engage in physical behaviors, whether fighting or kissing, at business functions.

PART 3 EXCERPT

OFFICE RULES

Every office has unwritten rules. Every office has politics. Every office has people who take it upon themselves to monitor both.

It is naïve to think you can avoid office politics. To succeed at work, you are going to play the game, so learn the rules and play it well.

Each office has rules, just like sports, and you have to follow the rules of the game you are playing. If you do not like the rules, switch games. Do not pout and complain about them, change them or switch games.

For example, think about baseball for a minute. Let's say you are a great outfielder but not the best hitter. At your next at-bat, you decide you want 4 strikes instead of being out after 3. Well, it doesn't work that way. The ump will kindly ask you to take your seat if you do not head back to the dugout after that third strike. You could sit in the dugout complaining about how unfair the game is. Or, you can get over your frustration and continue playing. Or, you can decide you would rather play football.

Let's say you head to the football field, only to find out they have rules there too. You are

on the offensive line and you do not want to be told what to do. You jump off the line when you want to, which makes you off-sides. If you do that on purpose more than once, your team is going to get really mad. And, you will get benched. You can sit on the sidelines pouting and complaining. Get it? You have the same options as when you sat in the baseball dugout.

Every sport has rules, just as every office has them. Learn the rules of the game and play fair.

MONEY MATTERS

1. Learn to read financial statements, so you can understand the organization's financial picture. You will be able to contribute to company goals better if you understand the financials.
2. If issued a company credit card, use it for business purposes only. Do not use it for personal purchases.
3. Know company policy on reimbursements for travel, client lunches, job materials, and other purchases you may make for work. Understand the policy before you purchase expecting to be reimbursed.
4. Complete expense reports on time. Do not leave a stack of receipts to be organized days later. It is too hard to figure them

out, and you likely miss some reimbursements.

WHEN YOU ARE NEW ON THE JOB

1. Focus on meeting people and learning the employer the first few days.
2. Be glad to be there. Keep talk of your former employer to a minimum.
3. Listen more than you talk. A good rule in general, but especially important for new employees.
4. Learn employer policies and procedures. Show respect for procedures.
5. Complete Human Resource's paperwork within two days of starting. HR should not have to hunt you down to learn what benefits you want.

PART 4 EXCERPT

Communication skills distinguish people.

People who communicate well get things done with and through others, one of the more critical requirements of business success. People with good communication skills usually have better relationships with coworkers, managers, clients, vendors, and associates.

Skilled people get their point across so others act on it.

The less skilled issue two or three emails to deliver the same message. Skilled professionals rarely have to apologize for miscommunication they cause.

The #1 tip is: be careful about what you put in writing. Always assume anything put in writing will be read by people you did not intend to read it.

Additional tips for communicating in person and in writing follow.

VERBAL SKILLS

When you speak, the listener considers your words, voice, and body language. A widely

accepted estimate of how each contributes to the message delivery is as follows:

- ◆ Words account for about 10%
- ◆ Voice accounts for 30%
- ◆ Body language for 60%

All three are important and must be consistent to enable the listener to grasp the intended message.

When someone doesn't understand what is said, or they take it the wrong way, it is the speaker's fault. Rather, it is the speaker's responsibility. It is your job to make sure the listener gets the message. Listeners should not have to work too hard to grasp your message.

A common mistake is putting the burden of communication on the listener, which is why skilled communicators distinguish themselves. The following tips will help enhance your skills so your verbal messages are delivered as intended:

SMALL TALK FOR BIG IMPACT

Small talk puts others at ease and establishes rapport, which can grow into a professional relationship.

Some people get nervous when small talk is required. To distinguish yourself, relax. Work on putting others at ease rather than having to be fabulous yourself. In fact, talking too

much about oneself is a no-no when it comes to small talk.

Be calm. Be interested. Be interesting. A few more tips follow:

1. Do not be intimidated by others with loftier titles or more experience, as you might make them uncomfortable.
2. Be interested in others. You can't fake it, so develop a sincere interest in other people. If your manager loves college football, you can follow her favorite team without becoming a rabid fan feigning interest. If he travels, be interested in hearing about foreign countries. Small talk is easy for those who are interested in other people.

SPEAK UP AT THE RIGHT TIME

The best advice for speaking up is to select your battles carefully. Do not speak up every time someone says something you do not like. Be selective. Speaking up for the sake of being seen as someone with confidence will backfire.

Do speak up when a situation calls for it.

PART 5 EXCERPT

The #1 tip to keep in mind regarding office equipment is that it belongs to the employer.

Some companies consider employee use of office equipment tantamount to stealing.

Think about it: the employer pays for the machine, upkeep, service, and any supplies required to run it. It makes sense the employer wants the machine to work when it is needed for business purposes. If too many people use office equipment for personal use, it may not be running well for work.

Understand your employer's policy. Even if it is considered acceptable to use equipment, limit your use.

BUSINESS TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

An Ivy League educated woman spent the summer of '99 as an associate with a large law firm in LA. She was stunned not to get an offer from the firm after what she thought was a successful summer. The reason she was not selected: her telephone skills were dismal. Her tone of voice irritated callers, and she was rude.

Although it can be difficult to be personable through a phone, there are strategies that make it a useful business tool.

1. Return all calls within 24 hours. 48 max.
2. Change your outgoing message daily when out of the office. Stay on top of it though. It is not funny to say, “Today is July 7th and I will be out of the office all day” when it is August 20th. Forgetfulness often appears to others as lack of attention to detail.

WORK EMAIL

Personal use of email during the work day is so extensive many companies monitor employee IP use.

Employers can easily track how computers are used every day. While some are lenient, understanding that some personal business must be conducted during work hours, many are not.

What is your employer’s policy? What are the consequences of violating the policy? Do not risk damage to your professional reputation over internet or email usage.

The following guidelines will help you be efficient and effective while using email for work:

1. Use a subject line that gives a clue as to the topic. “ABC Client meeting July 7th” is better than “ABC Client.”

OFFICE EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

If you do not own the equipment and supplies, do not use them for personal use.

Unless your manager approves using company time and equipment for personal use, do not risk damaging your reputation by stealing. That includes using the computer, copier, fax, supplies, and Internet.

Below are additional tips to make usage of company equipment effective.

1. It is not acceptable to stock your personal office at home with company supplies. Unless the employer has arranged for you to work from home, do not take supplies home.
2. Replace paper and/or ink in machines when needed. Do not walk away leaving the next person to do it.
3. Keep fax receipts with sent faxes. There may be a need to prove a fax was sent at a certain time.
4. Hit “clear” before using the copier. The previous user might have programmed 200 copies, on pink paper, reduced 75%, so check before starting.

PART 6 EXCERPT

Travel is a fact of life for many business people. One of the advantages is getting to see the world, or at least the country. One disadvantage is flights are not limited only to experienced business travelers. You will have to fly with infrequent travelers, so get used to it. Losing patience with elderly fliers, babies, or inexperienced travelers only serves to ruin the trip for all passengers and crew. Lighten up. For infrequent travelers, the tips below will make you seem like a pro.

An application to fly would make business travel a little simpler.

TRAVEL OVERVIEW

1. Most organizations do not provide overtime pay for time spent in airports. Do expect your usual paycheck.
2. Do expect the employer to pay for expenses incurred during business travel, but make sure you understand what is accepted. Policies differ, so know them before incurring expenses.
3. Keep all travel receipts and complete expense report within 48 hours of returning from trips. Talk to Accounting to learn the employer's system.

AIRPORTS

With the lines, security procedures, unhappy personnel, too few employees, flight delays, and impatient people, airports are not for the meek.

If you are new to business travel, familiarize yourself with the local and major domestic airports. Learn the layout and procedures, so you can make the best use of time you will spend there. Use the tips below to make business travel a positive experience.

1. Many airports do not allow family or friends beyond the entrance, so be dropped off at the departure terminal. Be ready to get your belongings out of the car. Do not hold up traffic by rearranging your belongings or saying long good byes.
2. When parking at the airport, follow the signs. Going the wrong way on one-way roads is unacceptable. Also, expect to pay to park. Have payment ready when approaching the cashier. In some airport lots, you pay at a kiosk before going to the car. Know the difference and be prepared.

PART 7 EXCERPT

You are heard the saying that everyone makes mistakes. Take no solace in that.

Seasoned professionals do not make the same mistakes as less experienced workers.

Seasoned employees think ahead, reducing the frequency of errors, and they handle their rare mistakes professionally.

Two considerations: reducing the number of errors and minimizing any damage of a mistake.

REDUCE THE FREQUENCY OF ERRORS

1. Think before you speak. Take a minute to consider your thoughts before blurting them out. Immature people blurt out whatever comes to mind. Seasoned pros think first.
2. Consider others before acting. How will the action affect others in your department, division, region?
3. Consider financial implications of actions. How will the action you are about to take affect the bottom line? The action might be wise, even if it is an expense, but you should know the impact prior to proceeding.

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